

Listing of the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A tissue puncture closure assembly, comprising:
 - a tissue puncture closure device having a distal and a proximal end;
 - a vascular insertion sheath having a distal and a proximal end;
 - wherein the distal end of the insertion sheath comprises a tip portion that is stiffer than an insertion sheath portions portion adjacent to the tip portion.
2. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the tip portion comprises a concave fold.
3. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 2 wherein the concave fold comprises no more than half of a circumference of the insertion sheath.
4. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the stiffer tip portion comprises a wall thickness greater than a wall thickness of the insertion sheath adjacent to the tip portion.
5. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the stiffer tip portion comprises a second layer of material.

6. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 5 wherein the second layer of material is disposed substantially along a concave fold of the stiffer tip portion.

7. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 5 wherein the second layer of material is disposed only along an edge of the stiffer tip portion.

8. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the stiffer tip portion comprises at least one stiffening ridge.

9. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 8 wherein the stiffer tip portion comprises at least two stiffening ridges.

10. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 8 wherein the at least one stiffening ridge is arranged substantially orthogonal to a longitudinal axis of the insertion sheath.

11. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the stiffer tip portion comprises a corrugated section.

12. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 12 wherein the corrugated section is disposed transverse to a longitudinal axis of the insertion sheath.

13. (Original) A tissue puncture closure assembly according to claim 1 wherein the closure device comprises:

a filament extending from the proximal end of the closure device to the distal end of the closure device;

an anchor for insertion through a tissue wall puncture attached to the filament at the distal end of the closure device;

a sealing plug slidably disposed about the filament at the distal end of the closure device.

14. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath, comprising:

a flexible tubular member having a longitudinal axis, a distal end, and a proximal end;

a hemostatic valve coupled to the proximal end of the tubular member;

a fold at the distal end of the tubular member, the fold comprising a higher stiffness coefficient than the tubular member.

15. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 14, further comprising a layer of material over the fold to provide the higher stiffness coefficient.

16. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 15 wherein the layer of material is placed only at an edge of the fold.

17. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 14 wherein at least a portion of the fold comprises a thicker wall than the flexible tubular member.

18. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 17 wherein only an edge of the fold comprises a thicker wall than the flexible tubular member.

19. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 14, further comprising at least one stiffening ridge across the fold transverse to the longitudinal axis.

20. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 14 wherein the fold is corrugated.

21. (Original) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 20 wherein the corrugated fold is corrugated in a direction transverse to the longitudinal axis.

22-41. (Canceled)

42. (New) A vascular insertion sheath comprising:
a flexible tubular member having a distal end and a proximal end; and
a hemostatic valve coupled to the proximal end of the flexible tubular member;
wherein the distal end of the flexible tubular member includes a tip portion that is stiffer than a portion of the flexible tubular member positioned adjacent to the distal end.

43. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion comprises a concave fold.

44. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 43 wherein the concave fold extends no more than halfway around a circumference of the vascular insertion sheath.

45. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion has a greater wall thickness than the portion of the flexible tubular member positions adjacent to the distal end.

46. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion includes at least two layers of material.

47. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 46 wherein the at least two layers of material are positioned in a concave shaped area of the flexible tubular member.

48. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 46 wherein the at least two layers are disposed only along an edge of the tip portion.

49. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion comprises at least one stiffening ridge.

50. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion comprises at least two stiffening ridges.

51. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 49 wherein the at least one stiffening ridge is arranged substantially transverse to a longitudinal axis of the flexible tubular member.

52. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 42 wherein the tip portion comprises a corrugated section.

53. (New) A vascular insertion sheath according to claim 52 wherein the corrugated section is disposed transverse to a longitudinal axis of the flexible tubular member.